

Family Service Association of America
44 East 23rd Street, New York 10, N.Y.

Report of Field Visit to

Family Service Bureau
Newark, New Jersey

March 25-29, 1963

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Purpose and Structure of Visit

Field visit was made at request of Family Service Association of America field consultant to review agency's program. When visit was planned the executive expressed concern about the gap existing between Family Service Bureau of Newark and PSAA. This concern is shared by national. Family Service Bureau has a long history of service and is a charter member of PSAA. It is hoped that during the next year the differences that have developed can be worked out in a mutually satisfactory manner. *to what does this refer to?*

Five full days were spent in the agency, March 25-29, 1963. Both prior to and during the visit the executive and staff were very helpful in preparing material for review, and making themselves available for consultation. All requested material was provided, and the executive and staff contributed considerable time to the study process. Several board members made time available for conferences. Prior to the visit basic documents and material related to the agency were reviewed, including: constitution and by-laws, personnel practices, budget, annual report and brochures, policies related to intake and fee charging, board list with notations regarding length of service, number of meetings attended and committee assignment, staff lists, including training and experience, history and answers to questions on self evaluation outline prepared by executive, statistics on agency services and individual workers' activities, reports of survey conducted by agency on Current Practices Employed by Family Agencies and special project in Hayes Home, and previous studies made of agency. During the visit a substantial number of case records were reviewed, including all the intake (103) and closings (83--some of these were the same) for October 1962, and a sampling of the cases selected by the individual workers as representative of the agency's work. Board and committee minutes from 1960 on were read. Individual conferences were held with the executive, the director of casework, the supervisor of intake, several members of the casework staff and a student. Joint conferences were held with the executive and each of the following: board president, chairman of Public Relations, Casework Practices and Membership Committees, and the director of Home Service, Newark Chapter, American Red Cross. Conference was held with the director of the Welfare Council and of the Family and Children's Division of the Council. Regular meetings of the board, the staff, and a psychiatric consultation were attended.

General Impressions

The board and professional staff are all sincerely interested in having the agency give the best possible service to the community. The agency is to be congratulated on its new quarters which are very attractive and well located. The staff is hard working. They should

be commended for their high interview rate which compares very favorably to other agencies. The board is deeply concerned with problems of financing, with continuing annual deficits resulting from inadequate allocations from the United Appeals. Both board and staff may well be overwhelmed with the enormity of the social welfare problems they are facing in Newark. Understandably unable to meet all the reported family service needs, they have developed a program which they believe is the most effective one.

It should be remembered, however, that no agency can be expected to do the whole job alone. While the primary function of family agencies is casework counseling to persons and families who are experiencing difficulties in their family relationship or in other aspects of their social functioning (Scope and Methods of the Family Service Agency), the second major emphasis of a family agency is leadership in community planning and influencing social policy and legislation. As part of the agency's program the board has a responsibility to flag unmet needs in the community and to carry on a responsible program of leadership to get these recognized and met either through its own services or those of other agencies in the community.

When previous studies have raised pertinent questions regarding this agency's program and whether it is the kind most needed from a non-sectarian family agency in Newark today, the agency has unfortunately felt attacked and criticized and tended to defend its position and activities rather than being willing to look at the questions raised to determine whether changes might be indicated. Whatever the reasons may have been, the effect was to rob the agency of extracting the values in these outside evaluations. It is obvious that the city of Newark with its very extensive social needs and problems, and extremely limited resources to meet these, presents a great challenge to all social agencies. In view of this it is doubly important that each agency's program be constantly reevaluated and modified to make certain each is making the maximum contribution possible in its unique area of responsibility.

Agency Program

In reading the case records a number of instances were noted where the agency has been helpful to the client and where the workers have shown skill in diagnosis and treatment. Certain facts and trends emerged, however, which raise questions for further consideration and study. They are:

- a. The major emphasis of the agency's casework program, as revealed in answers to questions in the self-evaluation outline and in the many records read, is expert counseling to motivated clients in relation to emotional or psychological problems. While this is a valid service of a family agency, it is only one facet of family casework, and would appear to be very limited in view of the needs for family service that have been cited in Newark and are apparent in many of the records read. Taken alone, it is a self-limiting factor tending to discriminate against a great many clients well served by most family agencies. The agency's purpose as defined in the new constitution would suggest a far broader casework program.

The agency has become known in the community as specializing with this client group and type of service to the extent that

agencies and community leaders have questioned where they could get more generalized family casework services such as those usually given by the nonsectarian family service agency. The Protestant group in the city have been particularly concerned about filling this gap in the agency's services, and there has been a movement toward expanding the Goodwill Mission to give family casework services, and to develop other services starting with friendly visiting under the auspices of the Newark Council of Churches. According to the minutes several board members have noted this and questioned whether the proposed agency may be duplicating the service of the FSB. The Child's Service Association now specializing in protective services because of the great need in this area, is also reportedly extending casework services and help to some multiproblem families that would normally be the responsibility of the family service agency in an effort to prevent complete family breakdown.

While it is recognized that no family service agency can be a coverage agency today, meeting all the needs for family casework in its community, it is recommended (see Range and Emphases Report, 1963) that every family agency try to provide a broad family casework program that will encompass a broad range of services and problems, rather than specializing in one area. This agency's present program seems to be moving more in the direction of a clinic approach, than a basic family casework program. If this continues it means that there is a serious lack of nonsectarian family casework services in the network of Newark agencies. While it is obvious the present staff could keep completely occupied with the current program emphasis, the board has an obligation to determine whether this is the most appropriate emphasis for a nonsectarian family service agency with the responsibility of serving the city of Newark and adjoining areas covered by the United Appeals. A voluntary family service agency has the responsibility as a community social agency of not only helping those who seek out its services, but of knowing the total community needs and making sure that its specific professional services are being directed where they will be most effective, taking into consideration the casework needs of the total community and other agencies available to give this service.

b. In reviewing the intake and continued cases it was obvious that a considerable number of applications never moved beyond the telephone conversation with the intake worker, either refusing or failing to keep an initial appointment, although their request for service seemed appropriate to a family service agency; and that a significant number failed to continue after one interview, even though a continued service was indicated. It is suggested that these be examined. All family agencies have a number of cases closed after telephone contact only, or one interview. In many of these, however, the required service has been completed and there is no question of continuing. In those, however, where the service has not been completed, and continuation is indicated, there is reason for examination as these represent not only a service not given but sometimes a loss of professional time that might have been more profitably invested.

(2)

Intake in a family service agency requires the very best skill in diagnosis and involving the client in a treatment plan. In this agency there is considerable pressure on the intake worker. In addition to the large number of telephone calls and other collateral work that is inevitably involved with intake, she has a very high number of in-person interviews. This may interfere with some of the collateral work and a reaching out that might enable some of these clients to continue and be helped. More basic, however, appear to be some of the agency's policies regarding service, and the problems caused by the methods of referral used by other agencies, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

c. The agency's emphasis on the approach to family problems through individual counseling should be examined, as was recommended in the FSAA study made in 1960. In some instances this is the best and only treatment approach. In many others, however, agencies are finding that a family centered approach, with either joint or individual interviewing, is far more effective. It is interesting to note that several applicants requested joint interviews and then either refused to come in or failed to continue after one or two interviews when the agency held to individual interviews. || 7(2)

In a number of cases read, some of which discontinued without help and some of which were helped, treatment might have been enhanced or accelerated had other members of the family been seen, rather than just one individual. This was particularly true in parent-child cases, and some maritals. It is recognized that the child is often helped through helping the parent, but it has also been demonstrated that it is often important to see both parents and the child to get an accurate diagnostic understanding of the total family. Agencies have found that in some cases more help can be given, faster, if the children are directly involved, and that in some this is essential if any help at all is to be given. Many agencies have found that by seeing the children directly as well as the parents they can do a preventive job. Others have found that by focusing on the whole family rather than on one individual they can help families who could not have tolerated an individual focused treatment. One case read in this agency where the worker involved the child with excellent results shows the advantages of this type of treatment. However, the agency appeared to be working directly with relatively few children and teenagers, though many of the cases involved their problems. More flexibility is needed in deciding which members of the family should be seen. A rigid policy of always seeing the child could also be very limiting. || 7(3)

d. In some of the cases read it appeared that the service might have been more helpful if the treatment goals had been more ^{than} limited and more related to the problems presented, rather than the person's life adjustment. In the caseload reviewed, there was a marked lack of home visiting, referrals and assistance with environmental problems, and a preponderance of counseling focused on the client's emotional problems. || 4

e. The agency has abandoned its previous method of keeping records on cards and is now using the traditional folders again. || 5
These are much less cumbersome and seem far more efficient. Some

dictation is summarized, rather than recording each interview. It is recommended that more of this be done, with emphasis on recording the worker's diagnostic thinking, treatment plan, and evaluation of progress at appropriate intervals in the case, as outlined in FSAA's draft statement on qualitative standards. (5)

f. At the present time the agency is seeing very few elderly persons. As there is a large aged population in Newark, the question is raised as to why this agency is not offering more services to them. The Jewish agency has a very active program, but apparently there have been no family casework services developed in Newark for the non-Jewish aged group. The impression is that their needs may be great, and that some examination of this should be the responsibility of this agency. (6)

g. In studying the intake and talking with staff it is obvious that there is a very real problem in some of the referrals to the agency. School referrals are extremely poor. There is a lack of clarity regarding the reason for referral, often the client has not been properly prepared, appropriate material that would help the agency in serving the family is apparently not forthcoming, and the client often never comes for the initial interview or drops after one interview. Thus, cases needing help are lost, and professional time is wasted in the process. This is especially significant since the school is reported to have many more cases which need family casework. Lack of clarity and appropriate referral procedures were also noted with several other agencies, including the house authority. It is strongly recommended that the agency attempt to work out a plan for more effective referrals particularly with the schools. In view of some of the problems reported it would seem important to get beyond the point of criticism and justification, and examine some specific cases to find out what the problems are and how school and agency can work together more effectively. It would seem well to involve the Family and Children's Division of the Council in this. The family service agency can make a very valuable contribution through working closely with the schools, and in most agencies the schools are a major source of referral. Relationships with other community agencies and referrals from them should also be considered in reviewing the agency's program and services. (7)

Area Covered

Of the families served in 1962, a significant number lived outside of Newark, Irvington, and West Hudson. According to its intake policy the agency says it serves residents outside this area (1) if the member of the family is employed within the area, (2) if there is no local family service available, or (3) if the client wants to seek help in Newark for reasons of anonymity. In view of the obvious limitations in the agency's staff and budget, and the need for additional family casework services reported in the Newark area, extension of agency services in this fashion is questioned. With the great number traveling into the Newark area daily for employment, it seems questionable whether this agency with its present budget and staff could even hope to give responsible coverage to this group in addition to the residents of the area, to say nothing of the other two groups mentioned. 118

Survey on Current Practices Employed by Family Agencies conducted in 60-61

It should be noted that the Research department at FSAA questioned the

methods and results of this study when it was brought to their attention in the early summer of 1961. From the minutes read it would appear that these questions outlined in a letter sent July 10, 1961 were not discussed by the committee or the board. This department is available to consult with Member Agencies in the planning of surveys and research projects. Through their specialized knowledge they can help agencies coordinate research efforts and use the time they have available for research in the most constructive fashion possible.

Board Structure and Activity

The Newark Board has had a group of dedicated members who have served the agency long and faithfully, giving very generously of their time and energy. There has not, however, been any rotation policy, recommended by PSAA in 1960, with the result that members devoted to the agency have tended to stay on the board for very long periods.

This has of necessity affected board attendance and activity, and seriously limited the election of new members. Question has been raised as to how well the board represents the various leadership groups in Newark today. At the time of the study 11 of 25 members had been on the board 10 or more years, 8 of those over 15 years, extending as long as 30 years. Attendance at board meetings has been poor, averaging 10 out of 25 present, for the 12 months reported prior to the study. PSAA recommends a quorum of one more than half the board, 13 in this instance; the quorum provided in the agency's by-laws is only 10. Only 8 of 25 members attended 6 or more of the 9 meetings; one missed all the meetings, 4 missed 8 meetings. (9)

In a complex and rapidly changing city such as Newark it is especially important to provide for a healthy flow of new board members so that the total board at any one time is broadly representative of various elements in the city. This is imperative if the board is to represent the agency in the community and to have firsthand information that will be of help in program planning and policy making. Some agencies have provided for this by having automatic rotation off the board after service 6 or 9 years, with reelection possible after one year. Some agencies get the same results through the efforts of an active Nominating Committee functioning on a year round basis. While it is important to have enough flexibility to retain as board members persons who have shown outstanding leadership qualities and whose continuing participation in policy making is essential, if too many are retained over too long a period the management of the agency is confined to too small a group and there is no opportunity for new groups to be represented and new leadership to develop. In some instances agencies have honored those who have given unusual leadership and service over a long period, and are still maintaining this interest in Family Service, by electing them as honorary trustees. In addition to being broadly representative of the different segments in the communities served, the board of the family agency should have members who are able to exercise leadership in the community, to invest both time and talent in the work of the agency, to think independently but at the same time consider differing points of view objectively, to have a commitment to the agency's purpose of strengthening family life, and a desire to serve the community, plus a readiness to work in partnership with other board members and the agency's professional staff. 9

Committee Structure and Activity

Much of the work of studying and assembling facts and policy material

for final action of the board is done by committees. Seven standing committees are found to be essential to the operation of a voluntary family agency; these are: Executive Committee, Finance, Nominating, Personnel, Public Relations, Casework Policy, and Public Issues. While the Family Service Bureau has essentially these committees, though in some instances they are combined with other functions, committee work would be strengthened if their purposes and activities were more clearly defined.

It is especially important for the Nominating Committee to function on a year round basis. This committee should give continuing consideration to the criteria for board membership. It is the eyes and ears of the board; it should discover promising socially-minded persons who can be brought into the work of the agency, and see that inactive persons are dropped.

Public Relations Committee should have a broader program with definite goals. It is important for this committee to analyze the agency's program as these relate to the public interest and to develop a sound, long range public relations program using various public relations techniques. Material and consultation are available from FSAA for guidance in this. The committee should be alert to the public attitude toward the agency, positive and negative, should find out the reasons, and plan a program aimed to increase both the agency's clientele and financial support. Actual fund raising, such as benefit performances, might better be assigned to another committee, as the public relations job should be a full-time one for a committee.

The Casework Policy Committee should be one of the basic committees in a family agency. This would be the committee to review the agency's program in relation to community needs and to make recommendations to the board for change in emphases or services offered. Through studying how families needs are being met and gaps in services, it can recommend changes in policies that may be required. Questions about intake policies, fee charging, etc. should be discussed and studied by this committee. In Newark the client interviews which this committee has now held over a period of years have been the major committee activity, except for a review of the fee scale. As was pointed out in the FSAA study of 1960, this is a far too limited use of a Casework Policy Committee. It is strongly recommended again that this committee's scope be broadened, with emphasis on its responsibility for studying how the needs of families are being met, where the gaps in service are, and making recommendations to the board regarding possible changes in the agency's casework program and policies within which the services are rendered. A FSAA statement outlining the role of this committee is attached.

Community Planning and Social Action

Attention is called to the second major function of the family agency, participation in community planning and public issues. In the past this agency has given excellent leadership in the development of health and welfare resources in Newark and the state. One of the largest agencies in the state, located in the largest city, it is in a strategic position to observe the social forces affecting families and the gaps in social welfare planning. It is strongly recommended that the board increase their activities in this area assuming a responsible leadership role. It is significant that the Public Issues Committee is currently combined with one on Constitution and By-Laws, and that the activity has been almost entirely centered in the latter area. This should be a separate committee, with clearly defined purpose, working actively and closely with other committees and feeding pertinent material to the board for discussion and action.

Membership

The idea of developing a membership, which the board was exploring at the time of the study, is strongly endorsed. Such a membership can strengthen the agency's roots in the community, serving as its informed constituency, giving it backing at times, helping to keep it related to the needs of the community, and interpreting the agency to a wider group. In many agencies members served on selected board committees, help with meetings and public relations activities, and assist with fund raising activities. Membership is usually open, dues vary, but are usually nominal to defray costs of mailings and meetings, with the exception of some provision for contributing or sustaining members who pay larger fees. It is important that the purpose of the membership be defined and activities planned. Material on memberships is available from the FSAA Library.

Budget and Financing

The United Appeals allocation has increased by only \$1000 since the FSAA study in 1960. At that time it was noted that this allocation had decreased in actual dollars over the years, a reversal of the national trend. Even though allocations to family agencies in other areas have not kept pace with agencies' needs, they have tended to increase over the same years. The reasons for the reduction in this agency's allocations should be examined. While the agency has been fortunate in increasing its capital funds despite having to use them for current purposes, future financing will have to be reviewed as the deficits are increasing. The whole question of financing appears closely related to program. Question is raised whether extending the agency's casework program might not increase its support by the community. Certainly if other agencies develop to fill the gaps in this agency's services the financing of the future will be even more difficult. With the need, which has been cited, for more family casework services in Newark every effort should be made to get more adequate financing through the United Appeals, and to develop, as has been stated with the theatre benefits, supplementary means of financing. It is important that the board take responsibility for examining the reasons for the very limited allocation, and presenting the agency's need to the United Appeals.

Conclusions

This agency appears to be at a crucial point in its history. In line with membership requirements of FSAA it should give serious consideration to the following recommendations.

1. Board and staff examine how effectively the agency's present casework program is related to the community's current needs for family service.
2. Develop more flexibility in casework approach and methods of treatment
3. Work with other agencies, especially the schools, through the Family and Children's Division of the Council, to develop more effective referrals and better services to the clients.
4. Explore ways suggested to strengthen board and committee activity.
5. Take a more active role in community planning and public issues.

FSAA recognizes that this agency faces great problems in providing effective family service coverage in Newark, and that both board and staff have given generously of themselves. As a national service we stand ready to help the agency broaden and strengthen its family service plan.